Willie J. Mahone 8/16/89

Meachum: 'Distorted and

I am writing in response to a column by Roy Meachum on August 9. The column was entitled "Get Smart?", and I suggest that Mr. Meachum get smart and publish factually correct statements.

Regarding a Klan gathering in Hancock on July 29, 1989, Mr. Meachum, continuing to downplay the threat of the Klan to the fabrics of a democratic society, made several material misstatements concerning myself. First and foremost, he indicated that "Western Maryland Law Enforcement Officials ... clapped Attorney Mahone in handcuffs to still his anti-Klan activity." That statement is blatantly incorrect, and smacks of defamation. It suggests that myself, an officer of the court, was involved in activity that was illegal, or at least perceived to be illegal by Western Maryland Law Enforcement Officials. I demand an immediate retraction of such statement by both Mr. Meachum and the Frederick News-Post.

Mr. Meachum also states that I "reported that most the Kluxies appeared (as) first timers, uncertain as to what was expected of them." I made no such report to Mr. Meachum or anyone else. The fact of the matter is that Mr. Meachum gave my office a call on Tuesday, August 8, and stated that it was important that I return his call as he needed some immediate information. When I returned his call, he began our conversation by making a reference to Klan activity in Hagerstown and then began an attack on some of the anti-Klan protesters who appeared in Baker Park on July 1, 1989. I immediately told him that although I did not agree with some of the utterances directed to members of our peaceful, non-violent demonstration, including myself, I was not overly offended by such utterances as the primary objectionable behavior was being displayed by the racist hate rhetoric of the Klan.

The simple fact of the matter is that, thanks to the great outpouring of good people, the July 1 counter-demonstration was a resounding success, and made a significant statement to ourselves as Fredericktonians and the rest of the world. Frederick Police Chief Richard Ashton has

factually incorrect'

stated publicly that the counter-demonstration, composed of about 700 people, was peaceful and without significant incident. It is time for those who opposed the counter-demonstration to recognize its success as the first Human Kindness Day. We now need to move on to addressing other concrete and systematic implementations of human kindness, including the increase of ethnic minorities on the Frederick City Police force.

The entire tenure of Mr. Meachum's distorted and factually incorrect article was to suggest that there should be no active opposition to the Klan. This is the same position taken by Mr. Meachum some time ago on the very same pages of this newspaper regarding opposition to the racist South African regime. Mr. Meachum's position seems to be that good folks in general, and minorities in particular, should sit idly by and wait for the osmotic dissolution of humanly repressive mechanisms. I cannot help but think that Mr. Meachum's position, on both South Africa and the Klan, is impacted by his unique cultural ethnic status. We should be reminded that it was the members of the Bourbon print media who led the attack against Reconstruction legislation, and who initially dubbed Martin Luther King Jr. as a rabble-rouser and troublemaker for participating in peaceful non-violence resistance.

Willie J. Mahone is an attorney in Frederick.